

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, May 3. 1707.

THE short Remark I made in the last Paper about Trade in *Scotland*, caus'd me to omit the 4th Head, which I would have People be thankful for in the Union, which was the pleasing Prospects of it in Time coming: But I hope, Ye have been at Church, Gentlemen, and perform'd the Duty of the Day, and I shall no more trouble you with Exhortations, when the Thing is over.

Besides, the good Prospect, the Union will afford us, must depend much upon our own Conduct in it, and therefore this 4th Head will come of Course in my pursuing my Design, of showing the reciprocal Duties of either Nation to one another; from which these three *Reviews* are a Sort of a Digression; and thither I refer it.

But your Thanksgiving being over, and the general Concurrence in it in *England*

having been so extraordinary, I cannot but bestow this one Paper more upon the Subject.

We are now one Nation, and the Profits of one Part are the Profits of the whole, as I shall be more particular in, when I come to the Article of Commerce: But pray, Gentlemen, let us have a Care of coming together with an Out of Humour Accident just at first, and this makes me reassume the Article of Wine and Brandy, which I gave you a short Hint about last Paper.

How the Parliament has determin'd it in *England*, is not yet known in *Scotland*, where this is written, and therefore I must speak of it as a general Head: but what I have to say upon it, shall suit you all, let it be which Way it will.

The Import of Goods from *France* has been the Grievance, and the Reason is, not that

that the Trade to *France* can be prejudicial to us under the present Circumstance of our Imports and Exports, as I have shown at large in the second Volume of these Papers, but the suppos'd Disadvantage lyes on the Freedom of Imports from *Scotland* by the Union, where the Duties on the Brandy is but 10*l.* per Tun, and on the Wine something less.

And had the Quantity been extraordinary, or the *Scots* had longer Time to have lay'd in Store, or had what is brought in, been $\frac{1}{2}$ Part of it *Scots* Mens Goods, we might have had something to say—

Rumours in Trade are like Rumours in War, always more mischievous in their distant, than in their closer Capacity; what a Cheque to Trade, what a Stop of Sale, what a Fall in the Price has this flying Phantom of a Northern Flood of Wine and Brandy made upon the Exchange, as if there was enough in *Scotland* to serve all *England* a Twelve-month, and that it would glut us in *England* with Claret and Punch.

But pray, Gentlemen, what is the Matter with you? How many thousand Tun of Wine and Brandy, do you think, is laid by in *Scotland*, that you should sink your Prices on one hand, and stop your Hands in buying on the other, for Fear of this Northern Deluge? Assure your selves, all the Claret now in *Britain* North by *Tweed*, is not sufficient to supply *Britain* South by *Tweed* one Months Draught: And pray, Gentlemen Vintners, how much of this will you let us have Next from the Hogthead under 3*s.* a Bottle? You may eke it out with *Lisbon* and *Oporto*, and call it true Claret from *Scotland*, and so indeed we may hear of it a great while; but the real Quantity is such a Trifle, that I cannot but wonder to see such a Clamour made about it, and when a Man stands at *Leith*, and sees the Gross of the Import there, and then remarks your mighty Alarm in *England*, it makes us very merry with you.

What strange Bug-bears have frighted you in *England*; that for such a thing as this, should abate your Prices of Brandy 20 per Cent. and stop your Importation of Wine from *Portugal*—When it is easy to assure you, that unless the Manufacture of

Drunkennes be very much decay'd in *England*, since the Author of this saw it, a small Regiment of the Friends to *Bacchus* may drink this Ocean dry, and want Claret, before the next Campaign is over.

This is one of the Effects of misrepresented Circumstances, and how do we laugh at one another, even at this little Distance; the Merchants play a close Game, and every Hour intriguing at one another; some laugh at the *Scots*, that the Opportunity of importing Wine and Brandy is engross'd by the *English*, and the *Scots* would be little the better for it—When a Motion was made in Parliament, that none but *Scots* Men Goods should be admitted, then the *Scots* Gentlemen had their Turn to laugh at you, that had launch'd out into a Trade, that none of you understood; and we began to talk at *Edinburgh* of drinking out some of your Claret for you at 6*d.* a Bottle.

I confess, that Clause, which the House of Commons pass'd, was very obliging to *Scotland*, and they could not but be sensible of it, and the most considering People were sensible of it; but I cannot but make one Observation upon the Consequence of that Clause, had it pass'd, which I dare say, every Body will allow me.

I have had frequent Occasion to notice in these Papers the unhappy Consequences of crowding our Offices with Affidavits; and some of the constant Evils which, I say, attend it, Are,

1. The making Oaths familiar to People, by which they lose much of the needful Solemnity, and the Awe of a publick Appeal to Heaven, is taken off from the Mind; this occasions People to play with their Consciences, and too often run rashly upon that, which they ought to tremble, when they think of.
2. The End is not equally answer'd; for when the Decision of an Affair is refer'd to the Conscience of the Parties, those, that the Law is made to preserve, receive the Damage, and those, who would detect, gain the Advantage; the conscientious Trader suffers, and the hard-mouth'd Wretch, that can sacrifice his Honesty to his Purse runs away with the Advantage.

I retire this, because 'tis so much to the Purpose here, I cannot shun it; had the Clause to admit no *French Goods* into *England*, but what were imported into *Scotland* by *Scott Men*, and which still belong'd to the Natives of *Scotland*; What had been the Consequence, but transposing of Properties back'd with all Sorts of Concealments, vesting and re-vesting Cargoes into one another's Names, and this with swearing and back-swearing, and I am afraid a great Deal of for-swearing too. And so the End of the Clause would have been defeated, the general Injury would have been ne'r the less, and the poor People would have been run upon all Manner of Rocks and Precipices, to the Shipwreck of Conscience, and to horrible Miscchiefs too many to repeat here.

I remember a Story, and I believe, have told it already in these Papers. In the Reign of King *Charles II.* a Motion was made in Parliament, and a Bill brought in to punish Adultery with Death, as by the way it is now in *Scotland*: The Title of this Act was, *An Act for the better preventing the Sins of Fornication and Adultery.* The late Duke of *B——m*, against whom, some thought, that Act was pointed, whether in the House or out, is not material, said he lik'd the Bill, but he objected against the Title, and being ask'd what he would amend in the Title, he answer'd, he thought it ought to be call'd an *Act for the better CONCEALING the Sins of Fornication and Adultery.*

The Application of the Story, and the End of telling it is to this Case. The Clause for the preventing Frauds in English-Men and Forreigners bringing in *French Goods* through *Scotland*, would in all Probability have only been a Clause for the better Concealing, &c. And I am perswaded, had that Clause pass'd both Houses, there should not a Tun of *French Wine* or Brandy the less have been brought into *Scotland*, or out of *Scotland* into *England*.

And the Case is very plain, for by that Clause there had been only two things to have been prov'd. First, That the Goods came to *Scotland* on the Account of *Scott Men*, and came to *England* in like Manner on the Account of *Scott Men*.

I acknowledge, the People of *Scotland* are more backward in taking Oaths, and more conscientiously tenacious of them when taken, than most Nations in the World; and I will, we were both as scrupulous of the one, and as careful of the other, as they: But tho' this is a general Character of *Scotland*, I believe no Body will doubt, but People might be found among the looser and more profligate Part of the World, who might be led into Temptation there, as well as in other Places; and I cannot think, it consists with National Prudence to lay the Snare for even the worst People.

If then such Sort of Wretches may be found in all Nations, who for a Reward would break thro' all the Solemnities of an Oath, and the Property of these Goods had been affirm'd in the Name of *Scott Men*, where had been the Act of Parliament?

But what must be done then to remedy this Evil? Done with it, say I, bear it, what would you do? And to make it easie, I verily think, we need do no more than to make a due Enquiry, and get an exact Account, how much the Quantity is, how many Ships, and the like.

And here let me add a Caution, which concerns some People more than it does me; If you will avoid the Flux of *French Wine* and Brandy coming into *Britain*, guard your Coasts, and keep that out that is out, and that that's come in now will do you little or no Harm at all; were it my Business to enter upon these Things, I could soon inform those Gentlemen, to whom it belongs, of several Schemes of *Clandestine Trade* laid so deep, as they will have Difficulty enough to find out, and in that Part an honest Man would have Room enough to serve the Government, and do Justice to his Country.

But as to the present Affair of *Wine* and Brandy never be uneasie about it, the Quantity will soon wear off, and if it were all to enter the River of *Thames* at once, I am satisfy'd by a just Rule of Proportion, it ought not to affect the Current Price of the same Goods in *England*, the Trifle of 5 per Cent. 'tis all a Notion, a Chymera perfectly ruin up *Ala-mode a Stock Job*, to a Consistency to serve some Peoples Turn, who love to take Advantage of their Neighbours.